

## FREE TRADE

The graphic shows several times the term FREE TRADE such that the letter shapes leave out a swastika in the center as a negative form. In concrete terms this graphical constellation can be read as an illustration of the audacious and sinister alliance of the American Vacuum Oil Company (Standard Oil) with the Nazis during the Second World War.

Bill Clinton took office at the end of the Cold War. The Clinton Administration embraced neoliberalism by pursuing international trade agreements that would benefit the corporate sector globally (normalization of trade with China for example). Clinton signed into law the North American Free Trade Agreement. The preparations for NAFTA included cancellation of Article 27 of Mexico's constitution, the cornerstone of Emiliano Zapata's revolution of 1910–1919. Under the historic Article 27, Indian communal landholdings were protected from sale or privatization. But under NAFTA this guarantee was defined as a barrier to investment. With the removal of Article 27, Indian farmers would be threatened with loss of their remaining lands, and also flooded with cheap imports (substitutes) from the US. Thus, the Zapatistas labeled NAFTA as a "death sentence" to Indian communities all over Mexico. Then EZLN declared war on the Mexican state on January 1, 1994, the day NAFTA came into force.

Hence the graphic can also be interpreted more generally. The visual sign of the swastika and the slogan of free trade have in common that while positive concepts of development and balance are postulated, however, inequality and destruction are and have been operated under this guise. Through this coupling, I refer to the globally observed amalgamation of economic power strategies with an inhuman policy.

The work was shown in the political exhibition "War in Peace" of the Association of Visual Artists (VBK) in ver.di at the art pavilion in the old botanical garden in Munich in 2011 and in the Urban Art Exhibition "Silence is a Lie" in the SEZ in Berlin in 2012 amongst other presentations. The similar draft "BLAME ME" has been included in the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials Project in 2012 which invited artists and justice seekers to submit proposals for a speculative monument to memorialize the Chicago police torture cases.

With kind regards,

Stephan Groß